

Community Excellence Awards 2025 Application Form

Please complete and return the application form to awards@ubcm.ca by May 30, 2025.

All questions must be answered by typing directly in this form. **All questions are reviewed and scored as part of the adjudication process; please do not leave any questions blank.**

SECTION 1: Applicant Information	_____ (for administrative use only)
Local Government or First Nation applicant: Township of Esquimalt	Date of Application: 30 May 2025
Primary Contact Person*: Meghan Nicklin Phone: 250-412-8511	Position: Recreation Coordinator E-mail: meghan.nicklin@esquimalt.ca
<input type="checkbox"/> I give permission for UBCM to share my contact information for peer learning between UBCM members.	
Secondary Contact Person*: Steve Knoke Phone: 250-412-8509	Position: Director, Parks and Recreation Services E-mail: steve.knoke@esquimalt.ca
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> I give permission for UBCM to share my contact information for peer learning between UBCM members.	

* Contact persons must be authorized representatives of the applicant (i.e. staff member or elected official).

SECTION 2: Category. Please select only one:
<div style="padding: 10px;"> <input type="checkbox"/> Excellence in Governance. <i>Governance processes or policies that are outcomes-based and consensus oriented; that support and encourage citizen participation in civic decision-making; are efficient, equitable and inclusive, open and transparent; and exemplify best practices in accountability, effectiveness, and long-term thinking.</i> </div> <div style="padding: 10px;"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Excellence in Service Delivery. <i>Projects/programs that provide effective services in a proactive manner and demonstrate benefit to the community.</i> </div> <div style="padding: 10px;"> <input type="checkbox"/> Excellence in Asset Management. <i>Projects/programs that demonstrate a comprehensive system of asset management policies and practices, meeting and/or exceeding accepted best practices.</i> </div> <div style="padding: 10px;"> <input type="checkbox"/> Excellence in Sustainability. <i>Projects/programs that incorporate a long-term sustainability lens by considering cultural, social, economic and environmental issues in planning, policy and practice.</i> </div>

SECTION 3: Project/Program Details	
1. Name of the Project/Program:	
	Youth Aquatic Safety & Leadership Program
2. Summary. Please provide a summary of your project/program in <u>150 words or less</u> .	
	<p>The Youth Aquatic Safety & Leadership Program (YASLP), developed by the Township of Esquimalt, is an innovative response to the critical shortage of lifeguards following the COVID-19 pandemic. By partnering with local schools to deliver lifeguard and first aid certification during PE classes, the program eliminates financial and logistical barriers to training—reducing costs from over \$500 to just \$108 per student. It provides youth with employable skills, leadership development, and direct access to job opportunities within municipal recreation. Since its launch in 2021, 24% of Esquimalt’s current lifeguard workforce are program graduates. The initiative strengthens inter-agency collaboration, enhances public safety, and increases access to aquatic programs, while fostering youth retention and community connection. With measurable impact, scalable design, and high community demand, YASLP exemplifies excellence in local service delivery—addressing an urgent need with creativity, inclusion, and long-term value.</p>
3. Purpose. What problem or issue does this project/program address? In other words, why was it started?	
	<p>The Youth Aquatic Safety & Leadership Program was created to address a critical and growing shortage of certified lifeguards and swim instructors—an issue that became acute during the COVID-19 pandemic and led to reduced aquatic services and temporary pool closures. The high cost of certification, limited local training opportunities, and lack of accessible programming for youth were key barriers preventing a steady pipeline of qualified staff. The program was launched to solve this problem by embedding certification training into high school PE classes, drastically lowering costs, and removing logistical hurdles. It was driven by an urgent need to restore and expand aquatic service delivery, ensure public safety, and create meaningful employment and leadership opportunities for local youth. At its core, the program is a solution rooted in equity, community collaboration, and practical workforce development.</p>
4. Outcomes. What outcomes have you seen, or expect to see, as a result of the project/program?	
	<p>The Youth Aquatic Safety & Leadership Program has delivered clear, measurable outcomes. Since its launch, 24% of Esquimalt’s current lifeguard workforce have been recruited directly through the program, helping to restore and expand aquatic service delivery. The number of available aquatic programs has increased, and community access to swim instruction and water safety has improved significantly. Youth participants gained recognized certifications (Bronze Medallion, Bronze Cross, and Standard First Aid) and many secured employment within the Township’s recreation services—some progressing to leadership roles. The program also strengthened collaboration between the Township and local schools, built a replicable funding model, and created a sense of</p>

pride and belonging among participating students. Most importantly, it helped retain local youth in meaningful community roles, while enhancing public safety, workforce resilience, and long-term service capacity.

5. Demonstrating Excellence. Describe how your project/program demonstrates excellence in meeting the purposes of local government in BC, including how it provides promising practices for others to follow.

The Youth Aquatic Safety & Leadership Program exemplifies excellence in local government by fulfilling core municipal purposes: delivering essential services, fostering community well-being, and supporting economic development. Through a collaborative, student-centered approach, the Township of Esquimalt addressed a pressing service gap in lifeguard staffing while simultaneously building youth employment pathways and leadership skills. The program integrates certification into the school day, leverages public infrastructure, and eliminates financial barriers—ensuring equitable access for all students. It embodies the principles of cost-efficiency, inclusivity, and strategic partnership, aligning educational goals with community service delivery.

This initiative also sets a promising precedent for other municipalities, particularly those with limited resources. Its scalable funding model, school partnerships, and embedded training structure are easily transferable and adaptable. By reimagining workforce development as a shared responsibility between education and local government, the program offers a replicable blueprint for addressing similar service delivery challenges across British Columbia.

6. Timeline:

When was the project/program initiated? 2021

Is it now substantially complete? Ongoing subject to funding

7. Category Criteria. How does your project/program meet the objectives of the category you have applied under. (Refer to Section 3 of the CEA Application Guide.)

The Youth Aquatic Safety & Leadership Program meets the objectives of the Excellence in Service Delivery category by proactively addressing a critical operational challenge—lifeguard shortages—that directly impacted public access to aquatic programs. Rather than relying on reactive measures, the Township of Esquimalt developed a sustainable, community-integrated solution that aligns with both its service and financial plans.

By embedding certification training within high school PE classes and leveraging existing recreation infrastructure, the program minimizes costs while maximizing community benefit. It ensures consistent delivery of essential aquatic services, enhances public safety, and builds local capacity through youth employment and leadership development.

The program is strategically aligned with broader community and workforce development goals and has proven adaptable over time, now running biannually with potential for annual expansion. It demonstrates a clear return on investment through increased

service capacity, stronger school-municipal collaboration, and high youth retention—all hallmarks of effective, forward-thinking local governance.

8. Secondary Categories. Does it meet the criteria of more than one category? If so, please identify one or more category and describe how the project/program meets the criteria.

No

SECTION 4: Award Criteria

9. Leadership. Describe the extent to which your local government acted as a leader in the development or implementation of the project/program.

The Township of Esquimalt played a central leadership role in the development of the Youth Aquatic Safety & Leadership Program. Recognizing the lifeguard shortage as both a public safety issue and a service delivery challenge, municipal staff took initiative to design a solution that was innovative, inclusive, and results-driven. Rather than waiting for external programs or funding, Esquimalt convened stakeholders—including school administrators, recreation staff, and community partners—to co-create a program tailored to local needs.

The Township led the development of the funding model, secured access to recreation facilities during school hours, and embedded training into the school timetable. It also absorbed financial risk by subsidizing course costs and structured the program to ensure long-term sustainability. By coordinating logistics, securing certifications, and championing the program publicly, Esquimalt positioned itself not only as a service provider, but as a community builder and youth advocate—modeling local government leadership at its best.

10. Innovation. How does the project/program demonstrate creativity and innovation? Does it contribute to increased efficiency or effectiveness?

The Youth Aquatic Safety & Leadership Program demonstrates creativity and innovation by transforming a service delivery crisis into an opportunity for youth empowerment and workforce development. Rather than relying on traditional recruitment or external training, the Township of Esquimalt partnered with local schools to deliver lifeguard certification during high school PE classes—a first-of-its-kind approach in the region. This innovative scheduling eliminated common barriers such as cost, transportation, and after-school availability.

11. Partnerships and collaboration. What partnerships supported the project/program? To what extent was collaboration (internal and/or external) evident?

The success of the Youth Aquatic Safety & Leadership Program was made possible through strong, intentional partnerships. The Township of Esquimalt collaborated closely with local secondary schools and School District 61 to integrate certification training into

PE classes—aligning the program with academic schedules and ensuring student participation.

Recreation staff partnered with certified instructors and internal municipal departments to deliver high-quality, accredited lifeguard and first aid training at the local recreation centre. Additional support came from parents, teachers, and school administrators, who championed the program's educational and career development value.

12. Financial management and planning. What is the financial impact of the program/project? Describe any financial practices that support long-term financial planning, value for money and/or economic development.

The Youth Aquatic Safety & Leadership Program delivers high impact at low cost, exemplifying strong financial stewardship and long-term value. By reducing certification expenses from over \$500 to just \$108 per student, the Township of Esquimalt made training accessible while minimizing strain on municipal budgets. The cost-effective delivery model leverages existing infrastructure, qualified in-house instructors, and coordinated school scheduling—eliminating the need for additional capital or staffing.

This investment has yielded tangible returns: improved service delivery through a stable lifeguard workforce, fewer cancelled aquatic programs, and higher youth employment rates. Program graduates often remain employed within municipal recreation, reducing recruitment and training costs over time.

Financially, the program aligns with long-term planning by addressing workforce gaps proactively, improving service reliability, and fostering youth retention in the local economy. It also strengthens Esquimalt's reputation as a responsive, business-friendly municipality, supporting broader economic development objectives. The model is sustainable, scalable, and delivers exceptional value for money.

13. Engagement and communications. How has the program/project been communicated, and what engagement has been foundational to its success? (Internally and/or externally)

The Youth Aquatic Safety & Leadership Program is presented as a course option to all high school students at Esquimalt High School during course selection. The information regarding the program, program expectations, and benefits was included in the course description in the high schools course offerings. The engagement through the school has proved successful as the course has been full with waitlists each time it was offered.

14. Transferability. In what way could other local governments in BC learn from or duplicate the process or outcomes of the program/project?

The Youth Aquatic Safety & Leadership Program offers a highly transferable model for other local governments across British Columbia facing similar challenges in service delivery, youth employment, and public safety. Its success lies in its simplicity, affordability, and adaptability.

Other communities can replicate the core components:

- School partnerships to embed certification training into PE classes,

- Use of municipal recreation facilities to reduce costs,
- Subsidized training fees to eliminate financial barriers,
- And alignment with local workforce needs to ensure job placement.

The program does not require major capital investment—just coordination, commitment, and collaboration between municipal departments and schools. Esquimalt’s experience highlights the importance of relationship-building, flexible scheduling, and scalable funding models to gain school district support and ensure long-term sustainability.

By providing a ready-made solution that supports youth, strengthens service capacity, and builds community connection, this program serves as a blueprint for cost-effective, community-rooted service innovation across BC.

15. Performance measurement: What performance measures, benchmarks and/or standards have been used to demonstrate benefit to the community?

The Township of Esquimalt implemented several key performance measures and benchmarks to track the success and community benefit of the Youth Aquatic Safety & Leadership Program:

1. Workforce Impact

- **24% of Esquimalt’s current lifeguards were recruited directly through the program, establishing it as a reliable talent pipeline.**
- **81 lifeguards employed during the reporting period, with increased program coverage and fewer cancellations.**

2. Program Completion & Certification Rates

- **High rates of successful completion of Bronze Medallion, Bronze Cross, and Standard First Aid certifications.**
- **Dual high school credit recognized, ensuring the program met educational benchmarks.**

3. Youth Retention & Advancement

- **Graduates retained within the community in recreation roles, some progressing to team leadership positions.**
- **Participation by Grade 10–12 students supports early career engagement and post-secondary readiness.**

4. Access & Equity

- **Reduced training costs from \$510 to \$108 per student.**
- **Integration into school hours removed transportation and after-school participation barriers.**

5. Community Service Continuity

- **Improved delivery of aquatic programs and enhanced public safety.**

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SECTION 5: Additional Information

16. Please share any other information you think may help support your submission.

Together, these indicators demonstrate a measurable return on investment, high community value, and alignment with both service and youth development goals. Pool hours are back to full pre-COVID scheduling (Esquimalt is the only pool in the Greater Victoria area to be back to full hours) and are offering more pool hours than any other pool in the province.

SECTION 6: Required Attachments

- ☒ Council, Board or Band Council resolution indicating support for the project to be considered for a 2025 Community Excellence Award. Note: UBCM will accept applications without a resolution, providing the resolution is received by August 15, 2025. Please contact UBCM if the resolution cannot be submitted by the application deadline.
- ☒ Five representative photos of the project. Photos should be submitted as JPEG files at a resolution suitable for display.
- ☒ Links to any publicly available videos related to the project.

Applications should be submitted as Word or PDF files. Submit applications to:
awards@ubcm.ca

SECTION 7: Signature

Applications are required to be signed by an authorized representative of the applicant.

Name: Steve Knoke

Title: Director, Parks and Recreation

Signature:



Date: May 28th 2025